



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**The Budget and Finance Committee approves amending the  
Navajo Nation Veterans Trust Fund to provide homes for Navajo Veterans**  
*Legislation moves on to Law and Order Committee for consideration*

**LEUPP, Ariz.** – During a special meeting on Tuesday, the Budget and Finance Committee approved Legislation No. 0193-13, which seeks to amend the Navajo Nation Veterans Trust Fund to divert two-percent of its set-aside to the Department of Navajo Veterans Affairs to construct homes for Navajo Veterans.

The set aside derives from the Navajo Nation General Fund that is generated from all revenues on the reservation and is diverted to the Navajo Nation Veterans Fund yearly in the amount of four-percent.

According to legislation sponsor Council Delegate Alton Joe Shepherd (Jeddito, Cornfields, Ganado, Kin Dah Lichii, Steamboat), by diverting two-percent of the set aside from the Veterans fund to DNVA, it would allow the construction of 15 new homes and minor repairs/renovations for Navajo Veterans in each of the five agencies on the Navajo Nation, through FY2017.

“Once this amendment to the [Veterans] fund is approved, it would be equally distributed between the five Navajo agencies,” said Delegate Shepherd. “We have calculated that in the next four years, we can build about 300 homes for Navajo Veterans.”

Delegate Shepherd also stated that local Veterans would be hired to build the homes, adding that Home Depot has a program called U.S. Communities, which allows an additional 10-20 percent discount on building supplies to construct the homes.

“Home Depot has been working with DNVA with construction costs and the amount it is going to take to build the homes,” said Delegate Shepherd.

Although BFC member Council Delegate Nelson BeGaye (Lukachukai, Rock Point, Round Rock, Tsaille/Wheatfields, Tse Chi’zhi) praised the efforts of the legislation, he also voiced concern over the purchase of building materials for all the housing projects.

“We should gear our business to local entrepreneurs for building supplies and labor, so the money stays within the Navajo Nation,” said Delegate BeGaye.

In regards to Veteran priority, BFC member and Army Veteran Council Delegate Danny Simpson (Becenti, Crownpoint, Huerfano, Lake Valley, Nageezi, Nahodishgish, Tse'ii'ahi, Whiterock) advised that low-income Veterans be made priority.

"We have to concentrate on the less fortunate Veterans and they need to be a priority when selecting who will receive these homes. At times, they are usually overlooked," stressed Delegate Simpson. "The more educated and [financially] stable Veterans need to extend a helping hand to the less fortunate ones."

In response to the concerns posed by BFC members, Delegate Shepherd said that DNVA will look into local businesses for building materials and labor, and that DNVA has already drafted eligibility guidelines for Veterans to apply for the new houses.

BFC chair LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse'Daa'Kaan, Upper Fruitland) recommended seeking legal advice in regard to the funding.

"This legislation might require a fund management plan, but I recommend that you confirm this with either the Department of Justice or Legislative Counsel, in terms of the use of the money to build the homes," said Delegate Bates.

Delegate Shepherd agreed and said that he and DNVA will seek assistance for the fund management plan, if it is required.

"The two-percent set aside is one way we are trying to address the needs of our Navajo Veterans and I am happy to say, we have full support from all five agencies," said Delegate Shepherd.

At the conclusion of the discussion, Legislation No. 0193-13 passed with a vote of 3-0.

The legislation will now go to the Law and Order Committee for consideration.

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